

High Seas South Pacific Albacore Troll Fisheries

Fishing gear type: Trawl, pot, longline, handline/pole and line, troll, multipurpose vessels, and liners not elsewhere identified.

Current category: Category II- all gear types.

Basis for current classification on the LOF: All gear components are classified as Category II due to the lack of specific information on marine mammal abundance and interactions with fisheries on the high seas.

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed: There are no documented injuries or mortalities of marine mammals in any gear type. However, there is no observer program covering this high seas fishery. Therefore, the list of species/stocks injured/killed in all gear types in this fishery is indicated as “undetermined” on the LOF.

Estimated number of current participants: Trawl- 2; Pot- 5; Longline- 12; Handline/Pole and line-8; Troll- 59; liners not elsewhere identified- 1; multipurpose vessels- 4.

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: N/A

Year added to the LOF: 2009

Category when originally listed: Category II- all gear types.

Basis for original classification on the LOF: All gear components were classified as Category II due to the lack of specific information on marine mammal abundance and interactions with fisheries on the high seas. Therefore, all gear types were listed as Category II, the appropriate classification for new fisheries on the LOF for which there is little information on which to base a classification.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: Trawl- 5; Purse seine- 1; Pot- 5; Longline- 11; Handline/Pole and line- 7; Troll- 45; liners not elsewhere identified- 1; multipurpose vessels- 6; fishing vessels not elsewhere identified- 1.

Past names, if any: None.

Gear description/method for fishing: The South Pacific albacore troll high seas fisheries target South Pacific albacore tuna using mostly longline or troll gear in waters solely outside of any nation’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Longline gear, which accounts for 86% of the albacore tuna catch in this fishery, is set with 1,000 or more hooks suspended from a horizontally buoyed mainline several miles long. Trolling vessels (including jigs or live bait) attach 10–20 fishing lines of various lengths to the vessel’s outriggers on a slow-moving boat (5–6 knots).

Target species: Albacore tuna.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: U.S. vessels fish in the South Pacific albacore fishery from November/December through April. Many vessels then participate in the larger North Pacific albacore fishery from April through October. South Pacific albacore fishing occurs outside any nation’s EEZ in an area bounded by approximately 110° W. long. and 180° W. long., and by 25° S. lat. and 45° S. lat. Most U.S. troll vessels depart from the U.S. West Coast or Hawaii and unload in American Samoa, Fiji, or Tahiti. The total U.S. catch of South Pacific albacore tuna has accounted for less than 5% of the total international catch in recent years.

Levels of observer coverage each year: There is no official observer program for this fishery.

Management and regulations: The South Pacific albacore troll fishery is not managed by regulations implementing any U.S. Fishery Management Plan. Conservation and management measures for this fishery are

currently not warranted as the stock is not overfished and there are no known protected species interactions. Sea turtles and marine mammals do not prey on the bait species used by these vessels and vessels are typically slow-moving and would therefore likely be able to avoid a collision with a large whale. As of 2001, the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act (HSFCA) requires U.S. albacore troll vessel operators to file logbooks with NMFS for fishing in the South Pacific.

History of Changes on the LOF

2011 LOF:

- Troll: Estimated number of participants was updated from 53 to 59.

2010 LOF:

- Trawl: Estimated number of participants was updated from 5 to 2.
- Longline: Estimated number of participants was updated from 12 to 11.
- Handline/pole and line: Estimated number of participants was updated from 7 to 8.
- Troll: Estimated number of participants was updated from 45 to 53.
- Multipurpose vessels: Estimated number of participants was updated from 6 to 4.
- Purse Seine: Removed from the LOF. The HSFCA permit for this fishery expired and was not renewed.
- Gear not elsewhere identified: Removed from the LOF. The HSFCA permit for this fishery expired and was not renewed.